

Bananaquit

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Bananaquit



Conservation status



Least Concern (IUCN 3.1) ^[1]	
Scientific classification	
Kingdom:	Animalia
Phylum:	Chordata
Class:	Aves
Order:	Passeriformes
Suborder:	Passeri
Family:	Thraupidae
Genus:	<i>Coereba</i> Vieillot, 1809
Species:	<i>C. flaveola</i>
Binomial name	
<i>Coereba flaveola</i> (Linnaeus, 1758)	
Synonyms	
<i>Certhiola martinicensis</i> <i>Certhiola dominicana</i>	

The **Bananaquit** (*Coereba flaveola*) is a species of passerine bird of uncertain relation. It is tentatively placed in the tanager family, but classified as *incertae sedis* by other authorities such as the American Ornithologists' Union. Its classification is debated, and it is often placed in its own family: **Coerebidae**. It has recently been

suggested the Bananaquit should be split into three species, but this has yet to receive widespread recognition. This small, active nectarivore is found in warmer parts of the Americas, and is generally common.

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Taxonomy

The Bananaquit was first described by Linnaeus in his *Systema Naturae* in 1758 as *Certhia flaveola*.^[2] It was reclassified as the only member of the genus *Coereba* by Louis Jean Pierre Vieillot in 1809.^[3] Prior to 2005 the Bananaquit was assigned to the monotypic family Coerebidae; there is currently no agreement to which family it belongs; some authors place it into the Emberizidae.^[4] Since recent studies have shed some light on the Bananaquit's affinities, many authorities consider Coerebidae an obsolete taxon. The Coerebidae used to contain other nectar-eating birds from the tropical Americas, but these have since been moved. The Bananaquit is part of a group that includes Darwin's finches, *Tiaris* (grassquits), *Loxigilla*, etc.—most of which were previously placed in Emberizidae, but are now known to actually be part of the Thraupidae.^[5] As such this species is tentatively placed in the Thraupidae family unless a study suggests more accurate placement. Nevertheless, its precise relations remain unresolved, so the American Ornithologists' Union classes it as a species *incertae sedis*.^[6]

It is still unclear if any of the island subspecies should be elevated to species, but phylogenetic studies have revealed three clades: the nominate group from Jamaica, Hispaniola and the Cayman Islands, the *bahamensis* group from the Bahamas and Quintana Roo, and the *bartholemica* group from South and Central America, Mexico (except Quintana Roo), the Lesser Antilles and Puerto Rico.^{[7][8]} Several taxa were not sampled,^{[7][8]} but most of these are easily placed in the above groups based on zoogeography alone. Exceptions are *oblita* (San Andrés Island) and *tricolor* (Providencia Island), and their

placement is therefore uncertain. In February 2010, the International Ornithological Congress listed *bahamensis* and *bartholemica* as proposed splits from *C. flaveola*.^[9]



The Bahamas Bananaquit with a whitish throat and upper chest may be a separate species



Illustration by Joseph Smit, 1886

Subspecies[edit]

- C. flaveola alleni* Lowe, 1912

- *C. flaveola aterrima* (Lesson, 1830)
- *C. flaveola atrata* (Lawrence, 1878)
- *C. flaveola bahamensis* (Reichenbach, 1853)
- *C. flaveola bananivora* (Gmelin, 1789)
- *C. flaveola barbadensis* (Baird, 1873)
- *C. flaveola bartholemica* (Sparrman, 1788)
- *C. flaveola bolivari* Zimmer & Phelps, 1946
- *C. flaveola bonairensis* Voous, 1955
- *C. flaveola caboti* (Baird, 1873)
- *C. flaveola caucae* Chapman, 1914
- *C. flaveola cerinoclunis* Bangs, 1901
- *C. flaveola chloropyga* (Cabanis, 1850)
- *C. flaveola columbiana* (Cabanis, 1866)
- *C. flaveola dispar* Zimmer, 1942
- *C. flaveola ferryi* Cory, 1909
- *C. flaveola flaveola* (Linnaeus, 1758)
- *C. flaveola frailensis* Phelps & Phelps Jr, 1946
- *C. flaveola gorgonae* Thayer & Bangs, 1905
- *C. flaveola guianensis* (Cabanis, 1850)
- *C. flaveola intermedia* (Salvadori & Festa, 1899)
- *C. flaveola laurae* Lowe, 1908
- *C. flaveola lowii* Cory, 1909
- *C. flaveola luteola* (Cabanis, 1850)
- *C. flaveola magnirostris* (Taczanowski, 1880)
- *C. flaveola melanornis* Phelps & Phelps 1954
- *C. flaveola mexicana* (Sclater, 1857)
- *C. flaveola minima* (Bonaparte, 1854)
- *C. flaveola montana* Lowe, 1912
- *C. flaveola nectarea* Wetmore, 1929
- *C. flaveola newtoni* (Baird, 1873)
- *C. flaveola oblita* Griscom, 1923
- *C. flaveola obscura* Cory, 1913
- *C. flaveola pacifica* Lowe, 1912

- *C. flaveola portoricensis* (Bryant, 1866)
- *C. flaveola roraimae* Chapman, 1929
- *C. flaveola sharpei* (Cory, 1886)
- *C. flaveola tricolor* (Ridgway, 1884)
- *C. flaveola uropygialis* Berlepsch, 1892

Description



The Bananaquit is a common visitor to bird tables and hummingbird feeders. The north Lesser Antillean *bartholemica* is among the subspecies with the darkest throat

The Bananaquit is a small bird, although there is some degree of size variation across the various subspecies. Length can range from 4 to 5 inches (10 to 13 cm).^{[10][11]} Weight ranges from 5.5 to 19 grams (0.19 to 0.67 oz).^{[12][13]}

Most subspecies of the Bananaquit have dark grey (almost black) upperparts, black crown and sides of the head, a prominent white eyestripe, grey throat, white vent, and yellow chest, belly and rump.

The sexes are alike, but juveniles are duller and often have a partially yellow eyebrow and throat.

In the subspecies *bahamensis* and *caboti* from the Bahamas and Cozumel, respectively, the throat and upper chest are white or very pale grey,^{[14][15]} while *ferryi* from La Tortuga Island has a white forehead.^[16] The

subspecies *laurae*, *lowii* and *melanornis* from small islands off northern Venezuela are overall blackish,^[16] while the subspecies *aterrima* and *atrata* from Grenada and Saint Vincent have two plumage morphs, one "normal" and another blackish.^[14] The pink gape is usually very prominent in the subspecies from islands in the Caribbean Sea.

Behaviour





A Bananaquit feeding on an orange in the Morne Diablotins National Park in Dominica

The Bananaquit has a slender, curved bill, adapted to taking nectar from flowers. It sometimes pierces flowers from the side, taking the nectar without pollinating the plant.^[17] It also feeds on sweet juices by puncturing fruit with its beak, and will eat small insects on occasion. While feeding, the Bananaquit must always perch as it cannot hover like a hummingbird.^[18]

The Bananaquit is known for its ability to adjust remarkably to human environments. It often visits gardens and may become very tame. Its nickname, the sugar bird, comes from its affinity for bowls or bird feeders stocked with granular sugar, a common method of attracting these birds.^[18] The Bananaquit builds a spherical lined nest with a side entrance hole, laying up to three eggs, which are incubated solely by the female.^[4] It may also build its nest in man-made objects, such as lampshades and garden trellises. The birds breed all year regardless of season and build new nests throughout the year.^[18]

Distribution



Bananaquit in its nest. Osa Peninsula, Costa Rica

It is resident in tropical South America north to southern Mexico and the Caribbean. It is found throughout the West Indies, except Cuba.^[14] Birds from the Bahamas are rare visitors to Florida.^[17] It is particularly prevalent on Aruba, Bonaire and Curaçao and also the most popular species of bird on the islands.^[18]

It occurs in a wide range of open to semi-open habitats, including gardens and parks, but it is rare or absent in deserts, dense forests (e.g. large parts of the Amazon Rainforest) and at altitudes above 2,000 metres (6,600 ft).^[16]

Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bananaquit>